



Emergency Management **UPDATE**

March 2001

Allbaugh confirmed as director of FEMA

FEMA News Release

Joe Allbaugh, President George W. Bush's choice to head FEMA, was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on Feb. 15.

Allbaugh most recently served as national campaign manager for Bush-Cheney 2000, Inc., with oversight for all campaign-related activities. Before the campaign, Allbaugh served as Chief of Staff to then-Governor Bush and worked with FEMA on nine presidential disaster declarations in Texas.

"The agency is looking forward to Mr. Allbaugh's tenure as director. As he said during his nomination hearing, he is a 'doer' and FEMA is an active agency that will benefit from a hands-on manager," said John Magaw, acting director since January.



This month in Virginia storm history ...

the March 5-9, 1962, Ash Wednesday Nor'easter hit the Virginia Coast during the spring tide phase of the sun and moon, producing higher than normal tides. The storm moved north off the coast past Virginia Beach, reversed course back to the south and brought higher tides and waves that battered the coast for several days. Huge waves toppled houses into the ocean and broke through Virginia Beach's concrete boardwalk and sea wall.



Do 911 warnings work?

By Bob Lambert, Staff Writer

Virginia's Emergency Managers make the call ...

An Alzheimer's patient wanders away from his nursing home in freezing temperatures. His relatives are frantic — he's done this before but never been gone so long.

They've called 911 for help. A search and rescue unit is on its way and local radio and TV stations have run alerts.

In some communities, authorities have an additional tool to help in emergencies like this one — an emergency notification system. This time, the authorities call you and your neighbors directly.

Emergency notification can perform such tasks as alerting a neighborhood about a missing individual, potential hazardous materials incident, flood threat, power outage, utility or road repairs or make regular checks on local senior citizens.

With Geographic Information System maps, a database of phone numbers and an automated phone message, authorities can notify an entire area in short order.

This system has met a definite need in isolated communities like Waynesboro. Emergency Services Coordinator Gary

Critzer finds the benefits of the system far outweigh costs.

"It allows us to keep our public safety personnel focused on their primary responsibilities during a major crisis without having to utilize them for notification tasks," Critzer says.

Many localities, ranging from rural counties like Campbell to large suburban counties like Chesterfield, are still debating the utility of the service.

Chesterfield Emergency Services Coordinator Lynda Price says contacting individuals who have cell phones or answering machines is a key issue.

"Both of these devices are almost universal and are a real problem," she says.

After a dam broke during Hurricane Floyd and contaminated the water supply, Emergency Communications Director Carol Martin says James City County decided to install a direct notification system.

Isle of Wight had to triple its monthly 911 tax from \$1 to \$3 to build a more efficient centralized dispatch facility. So, emergency notification will have to wait, says Emergency Services Director Richard Childress.

Though this technology can prove to be a boon by freeing up resources needed elsewhere during emergencies, it's not a cure-all due to costs and coverage issues.

Visit our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate for an expanded version of this article and a round-table discussion on the pros and cons of emergency notification.

Hitting the mark with disaster education messages

By Rohn Brown, VDEM Public
Affairs Outreach Coordinator

You've decided you need to educate your citizens on how to prepare for disasters. So, where do you start?

Studies have shown the best way to design a disaster education program is to identify the target audience considered to be the most vulnerable.

Ask yourself which segment of your population you consider to be most at risk in times of disaster or emergency. If you know the answer, you are ready to start.

▼ **Identify a potential message and test it** on a sample of your audience. If your target population is 55 and over, try it out on the senior citizens who meet at your local church or community center. Ask if your message is hitting the mark. They will probably tell you.

▼ **Identify key community leaders** in your target audience and ask them to help you tailor your message. They may give you some valuable suggestions and ideas.

▼ **Think about which media will reach your target audience.** If you are focusing on seniors, consider this research. According to an American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) report, adults 50 and older use newspapers, magazines, books and journals to learn most of the



time, regardless of age, gender, income or education. (See "How Adults Typically Learn" at http://research.aarp.org/general/lifelong_1.html.)

▼ **Be careful not to bombard people with printed material.** Two or three brochures will usually be plenty.

▼ **Use positive messages.** Instead of saying, "Don't drive through standing water," tell your audience what they should do: "If you see standing water in the road, turn around and find an alternate route."

▼ **Finally, emphasize your message by using a variety of visual tools.** The more

images people see, the more they will remember. If you can get your target group involved in a learning activity, they will probably remember even more.

These and other strategies will be included in the "Emergency Preparedness Community Outreach" workshop on May 1 in Chesapeake. Register online on our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/training.

For the latest community disaster education news, subscribe to the CDE e-mail service by contacting Rohn Brown at rbrown@vdem.state.va.us.



Dameron to head state mitigation initiatives

As the new manager of VDEM's hazard mitigation program, Richard Dameron is moving from floods to an all-hazards approach.

After five years in flood-plain management with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR), Dameron will focus on all-hazards mitigation planning and implementation. His duties will include administering three FEMA grant programs.

No stranger to disasters, Dameron coordinated the National Flood Insurance Program at VDCR and previously spent nine years in dam safety. He was also a member of the mitigation team in hurricanes Fran and Floyd.

A professional engineer, he earned a bachelor of arts degree in biology from the University of Virginia in 1975. Five years later he earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering, also from U.Va.

Lightning awareness campaign strikes again

Lightning is perhaps one of the most misunderstood and deadly weather phenomena. This spring, VDEM, in conjunction with the National Weather Service, is producing a campaign to help emergency managers promote lightning safety.

To help citizens get ready for outdoor sports and activities, the VDEM Web site will feature a special section on this topic from mid-April through September. VDEM will also mail a series of news releases on lightning safety to Virginia media and television meteorologists in April.

The National Weather Service is sponsoring National Lightning Awareness Week in June and will also produce a series of resources to help emergency managers in educational outreach programs.

Local coordinators are encouraged to use these materials in their own awareness campaigns throughout the summer months. For more information about this and other outreach programs, contact Rohn Brown at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6519, or e-mail him at rbrown@vdem.state.va.us.



Shocking Experience. Finding shelter is the first priority when caught outside in a storm (Photo courtesy of John Ogren, NWS).

THE HAZMAT FILES

Leak tests conventional wisdom

In a normal attempt to contain a liquefied propane gas leak, fogging the area with a deck gun helps to disperse the gas and prevent an explosion. Last November, this procedure added a complication that required some quick thinking to bring the situation under control.

Last November, Accomack County asked the Virginia Emergency Operations Center to help with a leaking underground liquefied petroleum gas tank. Apparently, a leak developed in the valve area during filling and liquid began spilling over the protective dome. The delivery driver called the Accomack Fire Department for assistance.

Initially, Area 7 Hazmat Officer Ray Haring recommended spraying the area to disperse the flammable gases. However, when a service technician arrived to repair the valve, he found it was covered with ice. Acting as a refrigerant, the leaking gas had turned the water to ice and even froze the ground nearby.

"Normally, you're dealing with a gas leak," Haring says. "This time it was in a liquid state. Since liquid propane is lighter than water, when you spray it, the water sinks and freezes."

To free the valve, the technician first tried chipping the ice and then applying methanol, but these attempts failed. Haring suggested using a hot water pressure washer to melt the ice in the protective housing. "That was the last trick in my hat," Haring says. "I was out of ideas."

A washer was rented quickly, the valve was freed, and the remaining 600 gallons of LPG were flared.

"If at all possible, avoid directing a hose stream over the valving and protective shroud of a leaking underground LP tank," Haring says. "Water will fall through the shroud, sink below the level of the liquid propane inside the shroud and freeze."

Haring also noted that working with an industry representative often makes all the difference in bringing the situation under control quickly.

"We had an individual who worked with LP and knew the inner workings of the valves and equipment," Haring says. "When you're working with somebody who can give you the information you need to do the job, that puts you way ahead in solving the problem."

Greg Britt, VDEM hazardous materials response branch manager, says responders have to be flexible in adapting to the situation. "When you get to the scene, you can't always go by the book," says Britt, a former firefighter.

"There is no step-by-step manual. Often, we have to depend on talent, innovation and wisdom. That's what you need when dealing with a hazmat incident."

For further information, contact Greg Britt at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6578, or by e-mail at gbritt@ydem.state.va.us. Ray Haring may be reached at (757) 363-3891 or by e-mail at r_haring@mindspring.com.

Weikel uses unique vehicle for EM message



A beat up "yellow dog" hand-capped school bus is helping make emergency management more visible in mountainous Rockbridge County. Bob Weikel, deputy coordinator, resurrected the relic as a shiny red and white emergency

support unit.

In this month's Profile in Emergency Management, Weikel tells how he has been involved with disasters since he helped flood victims in a nearby neighborhood when he was in the eighth grade.

From his perspective Weikel finds that experience is the most useful "gadget" in keeping up with the rapidly changing demands of emergency management.

Visit our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate to learn more about his unique approach to raising awareness in his rural locality.

Rockbridge taps into triple threat for weather warnings

By Bob Lambert, Staff Writer

When the NWS issues its weather alerts, Rockbridge County flips on its triple-header radar watch system. These days, emergency weather watchers wouldn't be without it.

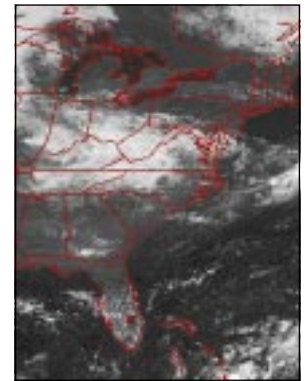
About six years ago, Rockbridge County Emergency Services lost their weather eye when their Internet connection and the Integrated Flood Observing and Warning System (IFLOWS) went down during a severe thunderstorm.

"We were pretty well left blind," says Bob Weikel, deputy coordinator, Rockbridge County.

Following the storm, Rockbridge County signed up for the Data Transmission Network (DTN) weather radar system, which operates independently of the Internet. The radar refreshes weather data on a half-hour cycle, too slow to capture fast-moving rogue weather cells that can slip through unnoticed with potentially devastating results.

"By the time you get an update, the storm cells may already be through your area," Weikel says.

For the past three years, Rockbridge has been using WeatherTAP, a commercial weather radar subscription service on the Internet (www.weathertap.com). The online service, which costs \$63 a year, updates the loops every 6 to 8 minutes, a substantial improvement.



The big picture. Sample WeatherTAP satellite view of the east coast.

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Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Disaster Related Needs of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities
March 8/Fairfax

2001 Virginia Emergency Management Conference
March 13-16/Williamsburg

Coordinator's Briefing
March 29/Charlottesville

Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparedness
April 3-5/Roanoke

ICS/EOC Interface
April 25-26/Roanoke

Reservist Training

Info and Planning RNAT/PDA Workshop Team Work in Crisis
April 3/Richmond

(See also "Disaster Related Needs of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities" above)

Search and Rescue

CAP GSAR Institute (Part I)
March 23-25/Ft. AP Hill

CAP GSAR Institute (Part II)
April 27-29/Ft. AP Hill

SAR Council Meeting
April 28/Richmond

Technological Hazards

Hazmat Technician
April 2-13/Ashland

Advanced Hazmat Control
April 30-May 11/Ashland

Terrorism Training Courses:

Public Safety Response to Terrorism - Tactical
March 20-21/Dahlgren

Public Safety Response to Terrorism - Awareness
March 24/Augusta County

Public Safety Response to Terrorism - Tactical
April 7-8/Caroline County

Public Safety Response to Terrorism - Management Considerations
April 10-11/Lynchburg

For more information about scheduling terrorism training courses in your locality, contact Patrick Collins by e-mail at pcollins@vdem.state.va.us or (804) 897-6500, ext. 6568.

Log on to the weekly Emergency Information Infrastructure Partnership (EIIP) forum discussions on Wednesdays at www.emforum.org/vforum/formchat.htm. Topics are posted on our Web site under "What's New."

Rockbridge (continued from page 3)

Weikel also uses the National Weather Service's Doppler radar, which provides updated screens every 5 to 6 minutes.

"Our primary source is WeatherTAP. It gives you loops. You can zoom in on your own county and see what kind of cells are developing in your area," Weikel says.

"We watch the cell movements and then issue the appropriate warnings through central dispatch to inform the public."

With DTN, IFLOWS, a subscription service like WeatherTAP, and the National Weather Service Doppler radar, Rockbridge County emergency managers have a box full of weather tools to track storms at any given time.

The race toward instant weather information shrinks the lead-time for emergency managers who have to deploy resources at a moment's notice. Multiple sources of weather information give Rockbridge County an added measure of protection against often fast-moving weather systems.

For further information, contact Bob Weikel by e-mail at rockcoes@rockbridge.net or by telephone at (540) 463-4361.

National Hurricane Conference set for April

The 2001 National Hurricane Conference will offer 15 training sessions and more than 40 workshops.

Scheduled for April 9-13 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., the meeting will feature a "crash course" in hurricane preparedness for public officials and industry.

Other highlights include an overview of the 2000 hurricane season and Bill Gray's hurricane forecast for 2001. Registration fee is \$275 (increase from March 1 early registration deadline).

For more information, call (850) 906-9224, e-mail to mail@hurricanemeeting.com or visit their Web site at www.hurricanemeeting.com.



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